DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 586 HE 035 269

AUTHOR	Farquhar, Robin H.
TITLE	The Changing Academic Workplace.
PUB DATE	2002-09-18
NOTE	11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Salzburg Seminar Universities Project Symposium (22nd, Salzburg, Austria, September 17-22, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Faculty; *Educational Change; *Faculty Workload; Higher Education; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Role; *Work Environment

ABSTRACT

Three aspects of academic career orientation have changed as a result of forces within and external to universities, and these changes have fundamentally altered the nature of the workplace for faculty members, resulting in serious challenges for the leadership of institutions. The changes occurred in: (1) the understanding professors have of their universities' purposes; (2) professors' identification with their employing institutions; and (3) faculty motivation to engage vocationally in academic work. In many institutions these changes have been recognized clearly, and there is a full awareness of the dangers inherent in them. In some institutions, these challenges have resulted in successful transformation, in institutional revitalization that may have been overdue anyway. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 468 586

The Changing Academic Work Place

Robin H. Farquhar

September 18, 2001

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

Robin H. Farquhar

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

HE 035 269

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE CHANGING ACADEMIC WORKPLACE

By

Robin H. Farquhar

Professor of Public Policy and Administration
and Former President
Carleton University – Ottawa, Canada

Salzburg Seminar Universities Project Symposium on "Academic Career Patterns"
Salzburg, Austria – September 18, 2002

Our task is to review how changes in universities over the past three decades have altered working conditions for the academic profession. In addressing this subject, I shall comment on three aspects of scholarly career orientation that I believe to be quite different today from what they were thirty years ago when I was chairing a graduate department with some twenty faculty members. My remarks should be interpreted with the following qualifications in mind:

(1) the experience from which they derive is restricted to my own observations during a professional career of almost forty years in several North American universities (mostly Canadian), to my studies as a scholar in the field of higher education policy and management, and to my brief engagements at institutions in about thirty other countries (most recently through participation in half-a-dozen Salzburg Seminar visiting advisor missions for establishments in Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia (including two in Siberia);

(2) in necessarily generalizing, I am conscious of the fact that exceptions can be found to virtually everything I say because of the great variation in the circumstances of universities – not only internationally and among those within a country, but internally at each institution as well; and

(3) time constraints enforce selectivity, so much more can (and I hope will) be said on these subjects than I can possibly say now.

Notwithstanding these limitations, let me press on recklessly to share some personal views on

IKOS-269

three aspects of academic career orientation that I believe have changed as a result of forces both within and external to universities, that have fundamentally altered the nature of our workplaces for faculty members, and that constitute serious challenges for the leadership of these institutions: (1) the understanding professors have of their universities' purposes, (2) their identification with their employing institutions, and (3) their motivation to engage vocationally in academic work. My focal group includes both current and potential staff.

Understanding of Institutional Purpose

There is substantial variability, both within universities and between them and the broader society, in people's perceptions of what these institutions are expected to be and to do. This can result in considerable confusion on the part of those contemplating or pursuing academic careers. Three examples will suffice.

First, the basic mission of higher education has traditionally been élitist – to identify the best and brightest of our younger generations and equip them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to enjoying fulfilled lives and to providing societal leadership; this continues to be a prominent expectation of universities in the view of many stakeholders. Recently, however, a different (and somewhat conflicting) priority has emerged for our institutions; it is typically referred to as "massification" and reflects the view that higher education is a public good that should be available to all who are willing and able to engage in it, which has profoundly changed the student populations of our universities and the nature of the work that their instructors must do. Moreover, universities have become recognized in many countries as agents of social change and drivers of economic development – not only through their teaching function

but especially as generators of knowledge that can solve problems, foster innovation, promote prosperity and contribute significantly to nation-building and civil society through their research and service functions. These differing expectations regarding the mission of higher education carry diverse implications for the nature of work in which academic staff should engage and, since most universities strive to meet all of them, faculty members can become understandably confused about what they are there for.

Secondly, the cultural values that shape the policies and behaviours in universities have been undergoing some changes in recent years – due in part not only to the mission alterations I've noted but also to social movements and to financial cutbacks. Traditionally, higher education has been characterized by a devotion to such principles as scholarly excellence, intellectual merit, and academic freedom. These values have been supplemented of late by a couple of trends that require modifications in the academic workplace. One is represented by what has been subsumed under the label of "political correctness" and is reflected in such concepts as employment equity, affirmative action, academic accommodation, gender-neutral language, zero-tolerance for discrimination, and harassment-free environments – ascribing to our institutions a social engineering role. The other has been characterized as the "corporatization" of universities and takes the form of management practices imported from the business sector, partnerships with private enterprises, and pressures to act entrepreneurially in order to generate revenues and stimulate economies. Because these various value systems inevitably conflict with one another as behavioural guides, faculty members can become understandably confused about what they should do.

Thirdly, the traditional three-part role of academic staff – research, teaching, and service –

has become greatly complicated. On one hand, the demands of the research function have escalated as technology has become more sophisticated and expensive, grants have become more restrictive and competitive, and scholarship has become more regulated and multidisciplinary; yet, institutional prestige depends largely on productivity in this domain and so the pressure on faculty to achieve international recognition as successful researchers is immense. On the other hand, for several reasons and in various ways that I have examined elsewhere (1), the last two decades have witnessed a renewed interest in the importance of our teaching function (especially at the undergraduate level, which accounts for most of our student enrollment and tuition revenue) and a determination to redress the typical undervaluing of this role in the work of academics; thus, prospective professors are now expected to demonstrate teaching competence in the selection process, to employ advanced technologies in their instructional practices, and to embrace multidisciplinarity in the courses they offer (2). At the same time, increasing demands for our institutions to play a leading role in developing national economies and fostering civil societies have invigorated an emphasis on the traditionally neglected service function of today's universities; faculty are thus urged to get out of their classrooms, offices and laboratories and to apply their expertise in the "real world". The growing complexity and increasing priority of all three academic roles – research, teaching, and service – renders it virtually impossible for a single professor to perform them all well, but provisions to facilitate differential workloads are rare; thus, again, faculty members become understandably confused about where they should expend their efforts.

These examples illustrate my first point – that a perplexing complication and an unclear understanding of institutional purpose have arisen over the past three decades, and that the

resulting confusion on the part of current and potential faculty members constitutes a significant alteration in the academic workplace.

Identification with Employing University

Another contextual change that I have observed over the period concerned is a reduction in the degree to which academic staff identify with their employing institutions: the extent of their loyalty and commitment to their "own" universities has waned. While it must be acknowledged that professors, especially in "research-intensive" universities, have characteristically behaved more as "cosmopolitans" than "locals" in Gouldner's terms (3) – i.e., their orientation to colleagues in their specialist disciplines elsewhere has been stronger than their affiliation with the direction of their own institutions – this tendency has been exacerbated by several contemporary circumstances. Globalization and the information technologies accompanying it have intensified (and necessitated) the internationalization of scholarship, so it is often easier (and more productive) now for academics to collaborate with fellow researchers around the world than with those in their own departments; this, along with a trend toward "big research", also stimulates greater inter-institutional mobility among faculty members. In the teaching domain, academic staff are becoming disaffiliated from their employing universities by such factors as: the growing tendency in higher education (especially for financial reasons) to increase the proportion of instructional staff who are on limited-term, part-time, and other forms of non-tenure-track appointments; the emergence of "virtual universities" which contract with scholars to design and teach specific courses via the Internet without offering them any form of continuing regular employment (the so-called "rent-a-prof"); and the trend toward assigning single-course teaching

duties to graduate students and practicing professionals rather than full-time academic staff, especially in undergraduate classes and professional schools. And the emergent emphasis on the service function, almost by definition, compels faculty members to focus their attention outward, away from their employing universities, rather than immersing themselves in the affairs of their own institutions.

It has been remarked, however, that in many countries of the former Soviet Union and Central/Eastern Europe these centrifugal forces are blunted by a conventional lack of inter-institutional mobility (it is not uncommon there for academics to be employed by and remain at the universities where they were enrolled as students) and by a relative absence of strong national and international scholarly associations or learned societies that promote an external orientation through the intellectual infrastructure of conferences, journals, and other forms of extra-institutional peer exchange. Nevertheless, in several of these settings it is common for faculty members to have two or more different employers in order to supplement the inadequate salaries that their universities can offer in these difficult times of economic transition – and thus, they necessarily have split loyalties.

So my second point is that a variety of factors, both internal and external, have contributed over the past three decades to a decline in faculty members' identification with their employing universities and that this, too, represents a change in the nature of our academic workplaces.

Motivation to Engage Vocationally

Finally, there are conditions on our campuses themselves that serve to reduce one's

satisfaction in the workplace and the motivation to become vocationally engaged there. The problems I mentioned of ambiguous expectations and role conflict are frequently exacerbated by tremendous pressures to produce and often overwhelming workloads. And the decline I have noted in professors' commitment to their employing universities may be perceived as responsive to (or even caused by) a reciprocal decrease in the institutions' commitment to their academic employees. Too often, our operational policies and practices succeed more in exacerbating these problems than in ameliorating them; thus, their effect has been to propel changes in the academic workplace, particularly those that may be viewed as negative in result (although this is less common in western countries than elsewhere). Among them are faculty salaries that are grossly inadequate and working conditions that are sometimes appalling (no offices, dirty buildings, meagre libraries, obsolete laboratories, autocratic managers, insufficient support staff and equipment, etc.). Opportunities for performance evaluation and professional development are sadly lacking in many universities, and the reward systems that are used carry little incentive to advance (indeed, some contain no linkage between academic salaries and career progression). Also, the bureaucratic mentality that characterizes much of higher education (especially where faculty members are effectively employees of state governments that are often geographically remote) is counterproductive in situations where an entrepreneurial orientation is essential to institutional survival.

Conditions such as these cause a drop in job satisfaction and employee morale, and they diminish the status of university work in the general public's view. Professors often feel unappreciated, unsupported and unguided, which can create a climate of uncertainty and insecurity in which one fears the prospect of unemployment – a concern shared in the west, with

tenure-denial lawsuits constituting "the fastest growing area of academic litigation in the U.S." (4). As a consequence, one's motivation to fully engage in the pursuit of an academic career is diminished; and this demotivational trend threatens the viability of our institutions and certainly represents a change in the academic workplace over the past three decades.

Conclusion

In summary, I have outlined three dimensions of change in the academic workplace related to scholarly career orientation that I have observed over the last thirty years: understanding of institutional purpose, identification with employing university, and motivation to engage vocationally. In all cases I have stressed the problematic features of these changes, noting that they can lead to confusion, insecurity and disengagement on the part of current and potential faculty members. The consequences may include a dangerous shortage of well-qualified candidates for appointment to academic positions, a high rate of faculty turnover, and a serious risk of institutional stagnation or deterioration. These changes thus constitute a severe challenge for university managers, for it is they who must lead initiatives to reduce or prevent the kinds of negative impact that I have sketched.

Let me conclude by stressing that I am by no means as pessimistic as might be inferred from my remarks. In most of the institutions I have observed, such changes in the academic workplace have been clearly recognized and there is full awareness of the dangers inherent in them. In many (both in the west and in the former Soviet Union and Central/Eastern Europe) I have been impressed by the creativity and determination with which certain university leaders are confronting these challenges. And in some, the challenges have been successfully transformed

into opportunities for institutional revitalization that was perhaps overdue anyway. It is my hope that a few of these success stories will be shared here, to the benefit of us all.

References

(1) Robin H. Farquhar, "Towards a Strategy of Teaching Improvement in Universities" (presented at the Salzburg Seminar's Universities Project Symposium on "The Development of the Regional Role and Contribution of Russian Universities in the Context of the Globalization of Higher Education", April 4, 2001).

(2) Robin H. Farquhar, "Faculty Renewal And Institutional Revitalization In Canadian Universities", *Change: THE MAGAZINE OF HIGHER LEARNING*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (July/August 2001), pp. 12-20.

(3) Alvin W. Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 2 (1957), pp. 281-306 and 444-80.

(4) Anne Mullens, "Does he get tenure?", *University Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 8 (August/September 2002), p. 11.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: The Changing Academic Workplace

Author(s): Robin H. Farquhar

Corporate Source:

Publication Date: Sept. 18, 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Robin H. Farquhar

Printed Name/Position/Title: Robin H Farquhar

Organization/Address: Carleton University, 604 Queen Elizabeth Dr, Ottawa Canada K2P1E3

Telephone: (613) 230 4738 FAX: (613) 230 1094

E-Mail Address: rfarquha@ccs.carleton.ca

Date: 10/11/02

(Over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfacility.org